

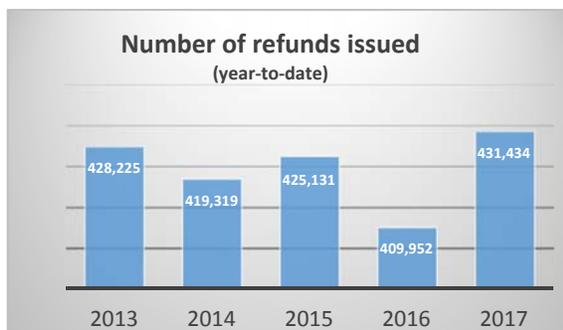
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 6, 2017

CONTACT: Paul Grimaldi  
Chief of Information and Public Relations  
[Paul.Grimaldi@revenue.ri.gov](mailto:Paul.Grimaldi@revenue.ri.gov)  
(401) 574-8766

## Division of Taxation concludes successful tax season

*Five-year high in number of refunds, total refund dollars, and average refund issued*

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Robert S. Hull, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Revenue (DOR), today announced the conclusion of a successful personal income tax filing season by the DOR’s Division of Taxation.



The number of refunds issued by the Division of Taxation so far this year, the total dollar amount of refunds, and the average refund are all at five-year highs, according to Neena Savage, the state’s Tax Administrator.

“Last year was a challenging year, but after a complete process redesign, intense team work, and careful application of lessons learned, Neena’s team have set record levels in performance,” he noted.

“This much-improved performance has occurred even as the Division of Taxation finalized the last elements of a once-in-a-generation change in technology,” Hull said.



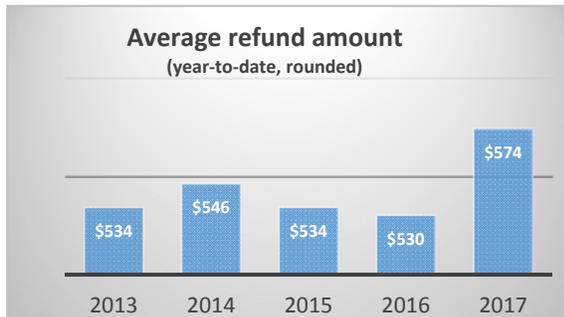
The Division of Taxation has issued 431,434 refunds so far this year, compared with 409,952 at the same point last year. In other words, the Division has issued approximately 21,500 more refunds this year than last year, an increase of 5.24 percent. It is the highest number of refunds the Division has issued in five years.<sup>1</sup>

The Division of Taxation has issued \$247.7 million in refunds overall so far this year, compared with \$217.2 million for the corresponding period last

<sup>1</sup> Tables show cumulative, year-to-date, tax year 2016 refunds processed and issued through June 5, 2017, and refunds for returns filed by comparable dates in prior calendar years. Numbers are before interest and offset. Numbers for overall returns processed are as of May 30, 2017, and comparable dates for prior years.

year. Looked at another way, the Division has issued approximately \$30.5 million more in refunds this year than last year, an increase of 14 percent. The aggregate amount of refund dollars issued is at a five-year high.

In addition, the average refund amount, another five-year high, is \$574.11 so far this year, compared with \$529.81 for the corresponding period a year earlier. That represents an increase of 8 percent.



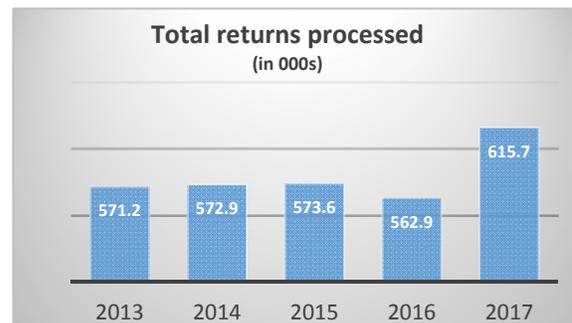
“Many hard-working taxpayers count on their annual Rhode Island personal income tax refund for any number of reasons. The Division of Taxation is making sure that the money is there when they need it,” Hull said.

#### CONTINUING TO PROCESS RETURNS AND REFUNDS

The Division of Taxation has processed 615,666 personal income tax *returns* so far this year, compared with 562,916 returns for the corresponding period a year earlier. That represents an increase of approximately 53,000 returns, or 9 percent. Again, this processing performance is at a five-year high.

The work is not over; the Division will continue to process returns and refunds for months to come, while staff work on correcting returns that contained errors when filed, contacting taxpayers as needed to obtain additional information, and fixing and refining internal processes to speed the return and refund process, among other things. In addition, the Division continues to receive and process returns that are filed on extension by this year’s October deadline.

“The Division’s numerous milestones this year were reached even as the Division served more taxpayers – through emails, phone calls, and walk-ins; stepped up efforts to protect taxpayer confidentiality; combatted the nationwide epidemic of tax refund fraud and refund-related identity theft; and completed some of the finishing touches on its new agency-wide computer system,” known as STARRS, Hull said. “The State of Rhode Island and its taxpayers have been well-served by Rhode Island Tax Administrator Neena S. Savage and her capable staff.”



#### ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY DIVISION OF TAXATION IN 2017:

- Revised its refund strategy to accelerate payment and manage expectations in an increasingly fraud-prone environment;
- Reviewed and adjusted staffing patterns, with increased cross-training to support the flexible allocation of human resources;

- Introduced core software and scanning technology refinements;
- Partnered with vendors and third-party software providers to reduce data importation errors;
- Enhanced tax forms and proactively partnered with tax preparation entities and preparers;
- Enacted proactive taxpayer and tax preparer education and training;
- Enabled personal income tax payments via online debit cards and credit cards;
- Implemented and refined rigorous statistical analysis to screen and select key returns and refunds for faster release;
- Expanded its “Where’s My Refund?” interactive online tool to provide more information on a self-service basis for a larger cross-section of taxpayers;
- Rolled out a communications model to address a surge in demand, with revised telephone and interactive taxpayer response services; and
- Is on track to prevent \$1.9 million in refund fraud, a 23% increase over last year.

### IMPROVEMENTS IN METRICS

In addition, the Division of Taxation recorded improvements in a number of key metrics focused on a faster and more efficient turnaround time.

<b>Rhode Island Division of Taxation – Process Metrics (Benchmarking for Improvements)</b>			
	Calendar 2016 Year-to-date	Calendar 2017 Year-to-date	Improvement
Days from final refund approval to refund issued	9.2	7.8	15.21%
Days from initial scanning to STAARS* load	20.1	8.6	57.16%
Days in STAARS prior to issuing refund	34.8	13.6	60.90%
* STAARS = State Tax Administration and Revenue System			

### REFUND STATUS

Before calling the Division of Taxation to check on the status of a Rhode Island personal income tax refund, use the agency’s “Where’s My Refund?” interactive online tool. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Taxpayers and tax professionals use the secure website to find out if the Division of Taxation has received a return and whether any associated refund has been processed.

The Division of Taxation’s “Where’s My Refund?” online tool is updated with fresh information at least once a week, typically late each Friday.

The online tool has been made more user-friendly this filing season by providing additional information about the status of returns, refunds, and related information.

For details, use the following link: <http://go.usa.gov/x9JSP>. That link also notes how soon you should start using the tool, after you've filed your return, to check on the status of your refund.



Check the status of your Rhode Island personal income tax refund any time, day or night, using the Rhode Island Division of Taxation's "Where's My Refund?" interactive online tool:  
<https://www.ri.gov/taxation/refund/>

---

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

---

The Division of Taxation is located on the first floor of the Powers Building, at One Capitol Hill, diagonally across from the Smith Street entrance of the State House. The Division is typically open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. business days.

Obtain forms and instructions at any time, day or night, through the Division of Taxation's website: <http://www.tax.ri.gov/taxforms/>. The main phone number is (401) 574-8829. (For questions about personal income tax, choose option # 3.) To see a list of phone numbers and email addresses to various sections within the agency, use the following link: <http://www.tax.ri.gov/contact/>.

The Division of Taxation cannot directly respond to taxpayer inquiries via social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, because of State statutes protecting taxpayer confidentiality. For the same reason, individual taxpayer inquiries cannot be directly addressed when made through traditional media, such as TV stations and talk-show programs. The Division recommends using the contact information listed in the preceding paragraphs – including the email address, phone number, and office visit information. The Division also recommends checking the "Where's My Refund?" interactive online tool: <https://www.ri.gov/taxation/refund/>.